The Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project held its 23rd annual conference on May 11 and 12 at the Circus Circus Hotel and Casino in Reno. It was wonderful to see the returning families and meet the new attendees! The families and service providers who attended participated in the following sessions:

- Gabbing with the Gang: Fun Facts—MaryAnn Demchak opened the conference with an activity designed to encourage the parents and service providers to get to know one another. Each attendee provided a fact about themselves to start conversations. The families’ openness and willingness to share created a supportive and inspiring atmosphere.
- Siblings Share their Experiences—Four young men shared their experiences growing up with siblings who had special needs. The young men discussed what they learned, how their siblings helped them grow, interactions with their siblings and other friends, what they wished their parents knew, and more. A very inspiring and informative session.
- Planning for the Future: Wills and Estate Planning—Charles Woodman discussed the pros and cons of wills and trusts as they relate to planning for the future for a child with special needs. A very informative session!
- Easy to do, Assistive Technology for Families—Liz Isaacs, Pam Young, and Kristina Britt discussed and demonstrated a wide variety of simple adaptations that can be made using easy to find items. A very fun and informative session!
- Communicating with your Child—MaryAnn Demchak and Jill Grattan discussed ways for parents to communicate with their child. Touch cues and object cues were highlighted and discussed in detail.
- Good Parent, Bad Parent: How Optimism and Hope Contribute to Family Emotional Health—Elaine Brown discussed various emotions, provided examples of how to enhance happiness and the importance of being grateful. A very interesting session!
- Nevada Legislative Update & Opportunities for Supported Decision Making—Mary Bryant discussed alternatives to guardianship, various powers of attorney, and legislative updates. Another informative session!
- What’s Next? Life After the Conference—MaryAnn Demchak led a discussion regarding goals for each attendee: both goals related to helping the child and each attendee. I highly recommend to all families that have not attended the conference, and those that did attend, to make the trip next year. The connections you will make with others can be life changing. One parent stated, “I have learned so much.”
Parent Conference Photos

Great Conference
Great Information

Inspiring
Informative
Fun
Reunion
Feliz
Optimistic

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For past editions of our newsletter, visit our website.

http://www.unr.edu/ndsip

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It's amazing how much we learn about each other!
I learned something new each session!

Feliz
Supportive
Happy to be understood
All children are capable of interacting with the environment around them. Play spaces allow the child to interact with his/her world through tactile exploration (i.e., hands on learning). Play spaces help to structure the environment in a way that the child can explore and exercise control. “Stay-put” play spaces are anchored in some way to allow exploration and play, without losing materials. Play Spaces are toys that encourage: exploration, self-initiated actions, cause and effect play, fine motor skills, visual skills, reaching, grasping, manipulating, and releasing. Play Spaces use high interest, multi-sensory materials that can be easily adapted to the unique interests of each child. Play Spaces can be used individually (i.e., independent play) or can be a fun interactive experience with others. Play Spaces are easy, individualized, cost effective to make, and come in a variety of styles. Cookie sheets can be used to make excellent play spaces.

Different textures and colors can be added to a cookie sheet to make a texture board. Texture boards encourage:

- Tactile exploration
- Searching
- Can be used as a “feely” board without any items attached

You can add objects to be found and explored:

- Cause and effect
- Fine motor skills
- Reaching, grasping, manipulating, releasing
- Self-initiated actions
- Visual skills

Modified texture boards allow the various textures to be covered to remove that potential distraction and place the child’s focus on the objects/items on the board.

Magnetic materials work well on a cookie sheet as well:

- Can play with various magnetic materials, even those not intended as magnets
- Can experiment with patterns
- Letters, numbers, etc.

You could also use the cookie sheet as a surface for art activities in a confined area

- Crayons, markers, paint, etc.

Add various textures under the paper for tactile feedback.

The play space could be used as an area to play with clay/molding materials:

- Slime
- Moon sand
- Playdoh
What is Dandy-Walker Syndrome?

Dandy-Walker is a brain developmental condition in which the cerebellum, the part of the brain responsible for the coordination of movement, is malformed. Typically, the central part of the cerebellum called the vermis is absent or has not developed fully.

Hydrocephaly is a related complication in individuals with Dandy-Walker due to cysts that form in the brain’s fourth ventricle and block the flow of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). This blockage allows excessive CSF to accumulate, swelling the ventricle and putting pressure on the brain. This swelling can increase the child’s head size resulting in a condition known as macrocephaly (“macro” meaning big and “cephaly” meaning head).

Prevalence and Symptoms

The prevalence rate of Dandy Walker is 1 in every 25,000 newborns, and signs and symptoms of the syndrome typically occur within the first year of a child’s life. While some children with Dandy-Walker have normal intelligence (rare), the associated brain abnormalities caused by Dandy-Walker usually result in intellectual impairments that can range from mild to profound depending on the abnormalities of the child’s brain. Symptoms of Dandy-Walker vary with age and can include the following:

Symptoms in Infancy:
- slow motor development
- progressive skull enlargement

Symptoms in Older Children:
- signs of intracranial pressure, including irritability and vomiting
- unsteadiness
- lack of muscle coordination
- jerky eye movements

Causes of Dandy-Walker

The etiology of Dandy-Walker is suspected to be genetic in nature. Dandy-Walker syndrome has been found to occur most often in children who have an extra copy of chromosome 18 (trisomy 18). However, Dandy-Walker is not exclusive to children with trisomy 18, nor does it occur in every child with trisomy 18. Dandy-Walker has also been associated with trisomy 13, 21, & 9. While children and brothers and sisters of people with Dandy-Walker have been shown to be at an increased risk of acquiring the syndrome, there is not an established pattern of inheritability of the syndrome, and Dandy-Walker can occur in children whose families have no history of the disorder.

Treatment

There is no treatment for the physical brain development abnormalities that are present with Dandy-Walker syndrome; however, a Ventriculoperitoneal shunt can be surgically implanted to allow excessive cerebrospinal fluid to be drained away from the fourth ventricle of the brain, reducing complications from hydrocephalus.

For motor complications and neurological and cognitive disabilities that are present, a team approach that utilizes various therapies and educational adaptations designed to meet each child’s specific mobility and learning needs will be necessary.

References:

What is Glaucoma?
Glaucoma is a term that refers to a group of eye diseases that damages the eye’s optic nerve and can result in vision loss and blindness (NIE; National Eye Institute, n.d.). According to the National Eye Institute, glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness in the U.S. (Mayo Clinic, 2014).

What are the Types of Glaucoma and the Symptoms?
There are several types of glaucoma, each with different symptoms. Only a few types of glaucoma are listed in this article.

- **Primary open-angle glaucoma** – the only symptom is gradual vision loss, specifically, gradual loss of peripheral vision, typically in both eyes. In the advanced stages, an individual may have tunnel vision; eventually vision may be lost completely.

- **Acute angle-closure glaucoma** – symptoms include (Mayo Clinic, 2014):
  - Eye pain
  - Nausea and vomiting (accompanying the severe eye pain)
  - Sudden onset of visual disturbance, often in low light
  - Blurred vision
  - Halos around lights
  - Reddening of the eye

- **Normal Tension Glaucoma**

- **Developmental Glaucoma** (e.g., congenital glaucoma, infantile glaucoma, juvenile glaucoma, secondary glaucoma)
  - Congenital glaucoma - cloudy eyes, sensitivity to light, and excessive tearing

- **Secondary glaucoma** – this term refers to a variety of types of glaucomas, with different causes such as: poorly controlled diabetes, high blood pressure, certain eye tumors, eye inflammation or irritation (uveitis). It can develop after eye surgeries or serious eye injuries. In some people steroid drugs used to treat eye inflammations and other diseases can trigger glaucoma.

- **Pigmentary glaucoma**

What Causes Glaucoma?
In general, “increased pressure within the eye (intraocular pressure) is usually, but not always, associated with the optic nerve damage that characterizes glaucoma. This pressure is due to a buildup of a fluid (aqueous humor) that flows in and out of your eye. This fluid normally exits your eye through a drainage system at the angle where the iris and the cornea meet. When the drainage system doesn't work properly, the fluid can't filter out of the eye at its normal rate, and pressure builds within your eye” (Mayo Clinic, 2012).

Is vision affected by Glaucoma?
Glaucoma can damage vision so gradually that the loss of vision may not be noticed until the disease is at an advanced stage. “Early diagnosis and treatment can minimize or prevent optic nerve damage and limit glaucoma-related vision loss. It’s important to get your eyes examined regularly, and make sure your eye doctor measures your intraocular pressure” (Mayo Clinic, 2012).

How is it diagnosed?
Glaucoma is diagnosed through a variety of tests; the tests may include:

- Measuring intraocular pressure (tonometry)
- Tests that look for optic nerve damage (e.g., instruments that look through the pupil to the back of the eye)
- Visual field test (to evaluate peripheral vision)
- Visual acuity tests
- Pachymetry (measures the thickness of the cornea)
- Gonioscopy (a special lens is placed on the eye to inspect the drainage angle)

How is Glaucoma treated?
Vision loss caused by glaucoma is irreversible; vision cannot be restored. If the pressure in the eye can be lowered, further vision loss may be prevented. The most common treatments include prescription eye drops, oral medications, laser surgery, filtering surgery, or microsurgery.

References and Pictures retrieved from:
- Eye image retrieved on--- from, https://www.google.com/search?site=imghp&tbm=isch&source=hp&biw=1366&bih=664&q=glaucoma&oq=glaucoma&gs_l=img.12...0.0.1.103025.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0...0...1ac.42.img.0.8.866.07k1KPuR36s#imgdi=
Mega Conference
Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities

The 2016 Mega Conference, **Ready, Set, Succeed! Building Foundations for Workforce Readiness and Success**, will offer quality professional development on how to provide effective instruction using innovative practices in the classroom and school setting. Additional keynote presentations and breakout sessions will be offered that focus on Digital Support for Learning, Gap Reduction in Special Populations, Effective Early Literacy & Reading Practices, School Climate and Culture, Setting the Stage for Post-Secondary Readiness & Success, and Differentiated & Brain Research Based Instruction. Presenters will include educators from across the state and the nation, including the renowned International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE).

**Where:** Harvey’s Hotel & Casino Lake Tahoe, at Stateline

**When:** April 8 – 10, 2016

**Website:** [http://www.cvent.com/events/2016-mega-conference/event-summary-0c0db75ce0274519b07f0efb7070077f.aspx](http://www.cvent.com/events/2016-mega-conference/event-summary-0c0db75ce0274519b07f0efb7070077f.aspx)

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NevAEYC
Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children

**Theme:** Leadership from Within

**Where:** Atlantis Casino resort Spa in Reno, Nevada

**When:** May 19-21, 2016

**Website:** [http://nevaeyc.org/events/state-conference/](http://nevaeyc.org/events/state-conference/)